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ABSTRACT

This issue on the general planning of vocational-technical education emphasizes that education for employment should be the main purpose of the educational enterprise, and that junior colleges should occupy a dominant position in this preparation. Vocational education was conceived of as part of the total educational structure and vocational theorists have never thought of it in any other way. It should be offered as an alternative to the "go-to-college" concept that has been so over-sold as to be taken for granted. The college preparatory program in high school and community college is probably the greatest farce ever. There can be no dichotomy between the general goals of education and vocational training. More and more the terms vocational education and occupational education are being used synonymously. This should not create confusion as both indicate preparation for the world of work. Toward the end of the 1950s a number of regional conferences directed attention to post-secondary vocational education programs. These national studies showed that the vocational needs of people are a high-priority issue. The role of the junior college in meeting these needs has been clear over the past decade, but the junior college has been slow to accept its responsibility. Career education is a national goal with high priority but it can not be achieved unless junior colleges offer more options and seek greater inter-cooperation. (Author/AL)

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The Case for Vocational Education in the Junior College with an Introductory Review of Recent Research

The Research

The development of vocational-technical education, often referred to as "career education," has had a tremendous effect on all levels of education, especially as the federal government places greater emphasis on its development. The *Junior College Research Review* has reported research studies of individual vocational-technical programs. This issue is on the general planning of vocational-technical education and amplifies the special report, "The Case for Vocational Education in the Junior College," by Melvin L. Barlow.

Vocational-technical education today must consider realistic programs for the disadvantaged, a subject covered by Schultz in *Occupations and Education in the 70's* (ED 047 678). Issues raised by Schultz include traditional programs vs. the new occupational curriculum, alternatives to the associate degree, and occupational education as a "touch of reality."

Preliminary exploration is urged by the Illinois Research and Development Coordinating Unit in a report to state educators, *A Master Plan of Research: Developmental and Exemplary Activities in Vocational and Technical Education* (ED 047 135). Activities that should precede master planning include: (1) K-14 articulation, (2) educational programs in all occupational areas, (3) programs for the disadvantaged, (4) in-service training to up-date instructors, and (5) evaluation.

Evaluation and pre-planning through community surveys are the subject of Henderson's study, *Program Planning with Surveys in Occupational Education* (ED 045 087). Surveys provide information on student characteristics, manpower needs and projections, accountability, and financing. They are also useful as on-going means of evaluating the programs to see if they are meeting the needs of both the employer and the potential employee.

A state plan for vocational education using a systems approach is offered by Hilton and Gyuro in *A Systems Approach—1970 Vocational Education Handbook for State Plan Development and Preparation* (ED 045 829). It outlines a plan for vocational education that can be applied in any state. It is intended for use by boards of education, advisory councils, school administrators, and vocational directors.

Planning Facilities and Equipment for Comprehensive Vocational Education Programs for the Future (ED 040 293) by Larson and Blake provides information on new approaches for those planning vocational education facilities. Recommendations include: (1) more research on facilities and equipment; (2) development of visual aids for facility planning.

Eight papers, collected in *Essays on Occupational Education in the Two-Year College* (ED 037 210) and edited by Gillie cover curriculum development, the needs of alienated youth, and the creation of a 6-4-4 configuration of six years in the elementary school, four in secondary, and four in the junior college. It may have merit for a coordinated program within the framework of "career education" espoused by Commissioner S. P. Marland, Jr.

Several major concerns are discernible in these reports: first, vocational education for the disadvantaged; second, planning coordinated from elementary school through the community college; and third, alternatives to the traditional degree programs. Finally, research is considered a requisite to planning, whether for curriculum or for physical facilities.

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The Case for Vocational Education in the Junior College

Education for employment should be the main purpose of the educational enterprise, and the junior college should occupy a dominant position in this preparation. Neither condition exists, but both are worthy goals.

While it is easy to criticize vocational education in the junior colleges, they do have many exemplary programs. Criticism, if justified, must center around comparative enrollments and the attitudes of policy makers.

The idea of the junior college's basic role in vocational education grew concurrently with the junior college itself. Over 40 years ago, Eells, writing in *Red Book*, observed that young men and women were finding adequate preparation "for many life occupations" in the two years of junior college. The same observation can be made today with even more relevance, for the opportunities have been greatly expanded. The junior colleges, however, have only begun to scratch the surface of their potential for occupational education.

To analyze this potential, let us review a number of problems and concepts that bear on the development of vocational education. A brief historical note will keep things in perspective.

Vocational Education—Origin and Change

Vocational education is largely a product of twentieth-century educational needs. Its formative period was from 1906 to 1917; it culminated in the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917. The vocational program was organized for high school students and employed adults. At that time, it would have been folly to develop it around the junior colleges, for only 76 of them had been established (16 in California) and the possibility of their contributing to the vocational needs of youth and adults was less than nil. Organizing vocational education around the high school was a daring move in 1917, because only about 20 per cent of those of high-school age were actually in high school. Vocational education zeroed in on the drop-out, who, in those days, was the eighth-grade drop-out, not the high school drop-out of today. Thousands of students left school to go to work. What the labor market needed then was a strong back—a weak mind was no drawback.

Over the years, many changes have taken place. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 and the Amendments of 1968 represent two of the most constructive pieces of legislation ever passed by Congress. Current legislation considers "all people of all ages in all communities" as proper targets for vocational education. This means:

1. youth in high school
2. youth in high school with special needs and problems
3. youth and young adults in junior colleges and other post-secondary institutions
4. employed and unemployed youth and adults.

The word "all" means exactly what it says. Vocational education is concerned with *people* and *work*—nearly all people and nearly all occupations. Much of the concern must be shared by the junior college.

A Popular Dichotomy

Vocational education was conceived of as part of the total educational structure – *never* have the vocational theorists thought of it in any other way. Although vocational education, in both theory and practice, has sought to protect the right of an individual to his cultural heritage and his right to (and need for) a basic education, the situation has been getting out of hand.

We have so over-sold the "go-to-college" concept that few ever think of the purpose of it--they just go to college. The college preparatory program in the high school—and in the community colleges—is probably the greatest farce ever perpetrated on the public. Despite opinions to the contrary, there *is not* and *can not be* any dichotomy between the general goals of education and the vocational goals. These equally important parts of a person's education must find equal expression at the post-secondary level. The institution that does not concern itself with the occupational future of students is not meeting its obligation to contemporary society. This failure is akin to an act of treason against the educational dream of America.

What's in a Name?

Recently interest has been shown in changing the name of vocational education to "occupational education" or "career education." Some want to call it "anything but vocational education." Among junior college educators, "occupational education" has found favor, but *why* this is so is not clear. Vocational education is not suddenly more important under the new term. Energy devoted to changing the name is wasted.

Many use the words "vocational" and "occupational" almost synonymously. One could provide some distinction by appropriate definition, but why do so? Of all the things that ought to be done in education, changing a name ranks low on the list. Effort devoted to name changing should not replace effort devoted to providing the education and experience that give a person something to offer in the labor market. The issue is providing a program that will solve some of the nation's need for qualified manpower.

The term "career education," currently sweeping the nation, connotes preparation for the world of work. At the early grade levels, the emphasis is probably on *awareness* of careers, on the many options open to individuals, and on making the students realize that work is still in vogue. Later on, career education should narrow the work interests of students to a few options—a family or cluster of occupations. At this time, the student should be allowed to *explore* the real world of these occupational families. Still later, at the senior high school for some and at the junior college for others, students must have a chance to select a group of jobs and begin actual *preparation* to help them enter those occupations. This phase of career education is *vocational education.*

It is incorrect to eliminate the term "vocational education" and call it "career education." This disposes of what career education is ultimately attempting to do. It seeks to have all youth become career-conscious and to obtain enough salable skills for the work society wants done. The actual preparation—the part that determines whether or not a person is employable—is vocational education, part of the total career education effort.

National Studies

The vocational movement began in the high school many years before post-secondary programs were emphasized. The need for post-secondary vocational education was demanding attention long before it attracted leaders in the junior college. It is difficult to cite the precise time of its start, but the post-World War II technological revolution provided fertile ground for the idea's growth. The need for technicians in national defense was a major motivating force. Toward the end of the 50s, a number of regional conferences directed massive attention to post-secondary vocational education programs. Four of them are described below.

1. *Panel of Consultants on Vocational Education.* During 1961-62, the President's Panel gave a significant push to vocational education in the junior college. Its report, *Vocational Education for a Changing World of Work*, made it clear that among the people to be served were those attending junior or community colleges and technical institutes. The junior colleges provided for an orderly progression of career development beginning in high school and for the vocational preparation of out-of-school youth and adults.

> The prestige of the post-high school institution facilitates the enrollment of persons who do not want to go back to high school for their further education . . . retraining adults to reduce unemployment is generally easier in institutions beyond the high school (5:133).

The report of the Panel emphasizes that an expanded economy requires trained personnel and that vocational education beyond the high school can do much to provide them.

The Panel also recognized that vocational programs on the post-secondary level were in a good position to react to changes in social and technological conditions. One recommendation was that ". . . the Federal Government provide funds to assist States in developing and operating vocational and technical education programs at the post-high school level" (5:259). The Vocational Education Act of 1963 encouraged the development of post-secondary vocational education programs.

The Panel also issued a report by Lynn A. Emerson that cited repeatedly the potential of the junior college in vocational education (6).

2. *The Advisory Council on Vocational Education, 1967-68.* The Act of 1963 provided that national studies of vocational education be undertaken at five-year intervals. The first of these studies was completed by the President's Council appointed in response to the Act.

Despite the fact that post-secondary institutions had had only a short time to respond to the provisions of the Act, the Council reported a 156.7% increase in enrollment for 1964-66. This supported the contention of the theorists that a vast need still existed for post-secondary vocational education.

The Council accepted the principle of expansion and suggested the following legislation:

> IT IS RECOMMENDED, That the act provide for at least 25 per cent of the funds appropriated for allocation to the States to be used for the intent set forth in purpose (2), post-secondary schools, and (3) adult programs of the Vocational Education Act of 1963 (7:199).

3. *American Vocational Association/American Association of Junior Colleges Seminar.* The AVA and AAJC, recognizing their common interests in post-secondary occupational education, held a seminar (May 1970) to explore means for positive action. National leaders from Congress, from vocational education, and from junior colleges studied the issues of administration and planning, continuing opportunities for occupational education, accountability, professional bonds, accreditation, and quality in occupational education (1). These two associations agreed that "community colleges should adopt the philosophy of preparing people to earn a living," for they could provide a reliable delivery system for vocational, technical, and manpower education.

4. *National School Public Relations Association.* The Association presented a summary of the innovations that appear to revolutionize career training and repeated the mandate of Congress: "Clearly, educators are being told, vocational education is a matter of national concern" (4:2).

Summary

National studies have shown beyond all doubt that the vocational needs of people are a high-priority issue. The role of the junior college has been clear over the past decade, but the junior college has been slow to accept its responsibility. Legislation now (October 1971) under discussion by Congress could provide substantial incentive.

So What?

Information to substantiate the effort of the junior college in vocational education has not been definitive; perhaps future data will remedy the situation. The Council study in 1967 found that 92 per cent of the schools offering vocational education were secondary schools. Of the post-secondary institutions examined, fewer than half were designated junior or community colleges. It is possible that these percentages have not changed significantly.

The history of vocational education shows that roughly half the enrollment has consisted of out-of-school youth and adults. These groups have become prime targets for vocational education because of the direct relationship of their needs and wants to the social and technological well-being of the nation.

The old axiom, "when institutions fail to meet the needs of society, new institutions arise to take their place," is relevant to post-secondary vocational education. Within a decade, a vast network of area vocational and technical schools has developed throughout the nation. Most are excellent and are meeting the needs of thousands of youth and adults. Did they develop because the junior colleges were blind to the vocational needs of the people?

It is easy to berate the junior colleges, using such words as snobbery, intellectualism, élitism, and academic traditionalism, but the point is not the *shortcomings* of the junior college, but its *potential.*

This potential has been recognized at the national level, but, although the junior college has been committed to the challenge of vocational education, on-site dedication is yet to be achieved. An obvious need is a general policy on preparation. It is not known exactly how many junior colleges have such a policy; unfortunately, some have none.

In 1971, California added Section 7504 to its Education Code:

> . . . it is the policy of the people of the State of California to provide an educational opportunity to every individual to the end that every student leaving school should be prepared to enter the world of work; that every student who graduates from any state-supported educational institution should have sufficient marketable skills for legitimate remunerative employment; and that every qualified and eligible adult citizen should be afforded an educational opportunity to become suitably employed . . . (2).

These are powerful words of policy, matching the preamble to P.L. 90-576, in which Congress declared "that persons of all ages, in all communities of the state . . . will have ready access to vocational training or retraining . . .of high quality, . . . realistic in the light of actual or anticipated opportunities for gainful employment, and . . . suited to their needs, interests, and ability to benefit from such training" (3).

Career education, now high on the priority list, will fall far short of its goals unless the junior college is able to offer vastly more options to high school graduates and to out-of-school youth and adults. The key to the whole situation is cooperation, not competition, among the vocational education institutions.

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